BRYAN WOOLESTON LANGLANDS: UGANDAN GEOGRAPHY
AND THE GOSPELS OF ST. LANGLANDS, 1953-1976

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ABSTRACT
This paper traces the life and accomplishments of the late Professor Bryan W. Langlands and his unparalleled contributions in both the academic and administration arenas in colonial and post-colonial Uganda. Professor Langlands was one of the early founders of The East African Geographical Review. His untiring efforts in the evolution of the field of Geography and Urban and Regional Planning in Uganda were truly remarkable. As we resurrect The East African Geographical Review, this paper is a tribute and celebration of the contributions this remarkable scholar made in the advancement of Ugandan Geography.

INTRODUCTION
Bryan W. Langlands’ association with East African geography in general and Ugandan geography in particular was very remarkable. Until his death in 1989, Professor Langlands was probably the authority on Ugandan geography. He published extensively on Uganda covering a wide ranging spectrum of topics. To some, especially in Medical Geography and the health profession, Professor Langlands is best remembered for a particular contribution, The Uganda Atlas of Disease Distribution (1975) edited with Hall. This was one of his major contributions to the elucidation of Ugandan geography. There was no topic on the geography of Uganda on which he did not contribute. As we revive the East African Geographical Review, it is appropriate to collect together a bibliography of his works, to reflect on his tenure at Makerere University, and to his contributions to geography in Uganda and East Africa. To the new students of East African geography, this can serve as an introduction to “The Gospels According to B. W. Langlands” (1971).

The focus of this article is on Professor Langlands’ life in Uganda. His early life and later work outside Uganda, are briefly discussed because we want to highlight his contribution to Ugandan geography. His contributions to academics and administration in Uganda are particularly important for the fact that they helped shape the future of geography and urban and regional planning in Uganda. His life and work represent an era which is almost foreign to the younger generation of geographers at Makerere (only two of the current faculty members were taught by Langlands), and which overlaps the colonial and post colonial periods. His work is also important because the majority of the students he trained became teachers, administrators, and some are teaching at universities worldwide. This paper is an initial step towards a tribute work to Professor Langlands being prepared for publication.

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Bryan Langlands was the younger of the two children born to Mr. and Mrs. Langlands. He was born on October 14, 1928, at Eastbourne, England. He was two years younger than his brother
Ian Langlands who lives in Nova Scotia, Canada. The brothers were separated during the war and saw little of each other until 1949-51 (Langlands, 1997). They were reunited after the war when they both lived at their home in Kenley, Surrey. Bryan Langlands was attending London School of Economics (LSE), and his brother was attending a Battersea Polytechnic.

According to his personal curriculum vitae, Langlands entered Selhurst Grammar School, Croydon in 1940, where he earned his Higher School Certificate in 1947. He proved himself as an outstanding student in high school. He wrote in his curriculum vitae:


After obtaining his Higher School diploma, Langlands, served for two years in the National Service in the Royal Artillery. He opted to do National service rather than go to the university directly after high school. This was a patriotic action on his part. The patriotic qualities were later exhibited in Uganda, when he became the unofficial British community leader.

To return to his early education, in 1949, he entered the London School of Economics, University of London. He spent three years as an undergraduate, graduating in 1952, with a First Class Honors degree. At L.S.E., he worked under Professor Wooldridge (Langlands, 1985). After graduation, Langlands enrolled in a post-graduate studies program at the London School of Economics for one year. This degree enrollment became a longstanding issue. During his first year of graduate work he was offered a job in Uganda. He arrived at Makerere in December of 1953.

The departure for East Africa was the beginning of another period of separation between Bryan and his brother, Ian. After a youth separation during the war, the brothers remained apart even in their adult life. Although they saw each other for short periods at about 4 or more years intervals they were very close (Langlands, 1997).

As indicated earlier, Bryan W. Langlands came to East Africa in 1953. He arrived by ship at Mombasa, and traveled by train from Mombasa to Kampala. According to one letter from Professor Baker, this mode of travel served another purpose of introducing new arrivals to the region. Langlands wanted to see the country which was to become his home for the next twenty three years. This slow pace of arrival is the contrast to his abrupt departure in 1976 (Hoyle, 1997).

Let us return to his ties with the London School of Economics for just a moment. As mentioned earlier, before he accepted the job at Makerere, he had registered for an M.A at the London University. For some reasons best known to Langlands himself, he failed to complete his M.A. thesis entitled “Historical Geography of Dorset in the Sixteenth Century.” The registration ‘lapsed’ (Langlands, 1975).

He was, however, able to register for Ph.D. work at the same institution. This was probably possible as a result of the department’s recognition of his scholarly work. The research topic for his Ph.D. was “The distribution of tsetse flies in Uganda, 1890-1960: A Study in Historical Geography in Human Ecology.” The two topics reflected his strong interest in historical geography. The Ph.D. research topic also represented his interests in medical geography and biogeography. In fact, his interest in historical geography was a continuation of his undergraduate minor in history. Also his research in historical geography was, in part, a reaffirmation of his earlier interest in history.

Perhaps, it is premature to characterize Professor Langlands’ work as historical and medical geography. Professor Langlands studied other areas of research. His writings cover an array of topics from population, political geography, the environment to many others. Was he a jack of all trades? His publications shed light on his vast interests in geography. Of course, his early experiences shaped his later research work. In order to understand his work in Uganda, and his contributions to geography of Uganda, it is important to trace his academic development from the very beginning of his arrival in Uganda.

ARRIVAL IN EAST AFRICA

EARLY DAYS IN UGANDA: SERVICE IN
Bakama BakamaNume and Matthews Musasizi

COLONIAL UGANDA

Langlands spent his first three years at Makerere College (as it was then known) as an assistant lecturer (1953-56). From then on, his career path could be described as a steady rise up the ladder of the scholarly profession in the areas of research and teaching. He was promoted to the position of lecturer in 1956, to a senior lecturer in 1962, and to professorship in 1968. Such a stellar rise was in part facilitated by several factors: (1) a small department of geography at Makerere; (2) a small expatriate group in the Department of Geography; (3) the generally brief stay of most expatriate geographers; and (4) close cooperation with his head of department Professor Baker. This close association or comradeship is evident in Professor Baker’s letters of support for Langlands’ promotion (Baker, 1961).

To be sure, the close association between Professor Baker and Mr. Langlands helped pave the way for the future of geography at Makerere. Professor Baker wanted to have a continuity in geography. Most other established geographers who came through Makerere were not ready for the colonial service or post-colonial service. In the absence of local geographers, therefore, taking a fresh graduate and grooming him for future leadership of the department was not only a logical, but a rational action on the part of Professor Baker.

For several years, however, the two were the only permanent foreign born geographers in the department. Local professional geographers in the academic arena were a rarity. The local geography graduates were more likely to work in the civil service as government employees, or as planners in city administration. The few students who remained to become professional geographers in academia included the likes of the late Professor Simeon Omine and Dr. Joseph Ouma who came back briefly to the Department of Geography at Makerere, but then left for the University of Nairobi, Kenya. The two foreign born geographers remained as the backbone of the geography department at Makerere, while Nairobi became a strong department on the basis of local geographers.

When he first arrived, there were three faculty members. As a junior member of the faculty he did his share of teaching. Surprisingly, his share did not decrease with his rise in seniority. In his early days at Makerere, he taught courses in the following areas: Regional Geography of Europe; World Population; The Geography of Traditional Societies; Biogeography of East Africa; The Political Geography of the Muslim World; Regional Geography of Southern Asia; Elementary Climatology; Elementary Practical Geography; and the Tropical African Environment (Langlands, 1976).

Also, in his later years in the department, he taught the following courses: Environments of the World; A Systematic Geography of Uganda; Principles of Political Geography; Principles of Biogeography; and Geography and Administration in Uganda. The last course was taught at the Institute of Public Administration for post-graduate diploma students (Langlands, 1976). He also contributed to seminars and field methods classes.

The large number and range of courses taught during his early years is typical of a small department. A faculty member taught everything according to the needs of the department. There was no room for specialization. The needs of the department superseded the individual’s research agendas. This is probably why Langlands’ writings represent a wide range of themes, i.e. diversity of research interests as dictated by the teaching circumstances and the curriculum.

Through his course offerings, Professor Langlands interacted with all students. He taught courses at all levels of study. Environments of the World was a full first year course, A Systematic Geography of Uganda was a full third year course, and Regional courses were for second year students. To the first year students, he presented a picture of an imposing professor although small in stature. He was somewhat unapproachable to most first year students. This view was common among students. In colonial and post colonial Uganda, this reaction was true of most European professors and lecturers.

To the second and third year students, he was very approachable, and an encouraging individual. This may be a function of students getting used to their professors as time passed by. Besides teaching and advising, Langlands found time to tour schools in other parts of East Africa. In 1959, he toured schools in the then Tanganyika (now Tanzania). He also did consultation work in medical
SERVICES IN INDEPENDENT UGANDA

In 1962, Uganda celebrated its political independence from the United Kingdom. In the same year, Langlands was promoted to Senior Lecturer in Geography. The newly promoted academic and the newly independent country were to witness the unfolding of opposing events in post colonial Uganda. There were early events which rejuvenated the newly independent state, and later events that led to the decline of the state and institutions of academic learning like Makerere. Two closely related qualities about Langlands began to emerge. He became very diversified in his research and teaching, and his promotions tended to merge with political development.

By early 1960s, Langlands had established himself as an authority on his subject, and his opinions were respected by both the East African Typanosomiasis Research Organization, and the Uganda Tsetse Fly Control Department (Baker, 1961). Professor Baker described Langlands: "an effective teacher and fortunately for the department of geography he has been prepared to range widely in his teaching activities" (Baker, 1961).

He was prepared to teach a range of courses and this may have influenced his research interests. As his research progressed, Langlands developed and introduced new courses in the department for geography majors. Two of the most popular courses were medical and political geography.

The change on the political scene in the country seemed to reflect Langlands’ academic development. These two issues were just by coincidence. Langlands was only political when the interests of his students were threatened (Langlands, 1977). As already indicated, Langlands was promoted to senior lecturer in the same year Uganda attained its independence. In 1966, President Obote abolished the Uganda traditional kingdoms, rewrote the constitution, and declared Uganda a republic. One year later (in 1967), Langlands was promoted to professorship and headship of the department of geography. Professor Langlands’ promotion to replace the retiring Professor Baker was a symbol of continuity in a changing political environment. This change and continuity was to be the last.

CONTINUITY AT MEKERERE UNIVERSITY

The Motto of Makerere is “We Build for the Future.” Langlands and other academics at Makerere strived to build for the future in Uganda. Makerere and the department of geography remained an outstanding academic environment until 1975. The University was often listed among the best places of higher learning. The department remained very productive especially at the undergraduate level.

Under his leadership the department continued to prosper. He instituted in the department his own belief of what geography should be – a holistic discipline rooted in human ecology. His inaugural lecture in 1969, “The dilemma of a dilettante and disintegration of a discipline,” became a standard reading requirement for all students of geography at Makerere. Unfortunately, Professor Langlands was a true product of the colonial university education system. He was always right. His word was nothing but the whole truth -- the Gospels according to St. B. W. Langlands was the true word of geography. No student would dare debate Professor Langlands. His years as professor and head of the department of geography were very productive years despite the ascendency of the Idi Amin regime.

DEANSHIP AND POLITICAL CHANGES IN UGANDA

In 1971, President Obote was overthrown by Idi Amin, his army chief. In 1972, Professor Langlands was appointed Acting Dean of the Faculty of Arts. A year later, the appointment was confirmed. As professor, head of department, and dean of faculty of arts, Langlands was the most senior member of faculty of arts. This was partly a product of political changes. During the Amin years, many senior faculty members left Makerere. So Langlands’ reign as dean was characterized by a big seniority gap between the dean, and junior lecturers left behind. This created an authoritarian deanship. It was often said that he represented the
geography interests above those of the faculty.

He created some academic enemies as Dean of Arts. When his term ended the new dean refused to renew Langlands’ professorship. Langlands responded as follows:

“I am glad that the decision has been taken. For in the manner that it has been effected it is clear beyond any possible doubt that the decision is a political one. For my own part, I have had the highest opinions of the senior people who govern our futures, … I can only say that I am sorry that this opinion has not been reciprocated” (Langlands, 1976: Letter).

In spite of the fact that Professor Langlands’ tenure as dean overlapped with his headship and the busy schedule this entailed, he continued to be a very productive scholar. The first edition of The Uganda Atlas of Disease Distribution co-edited with Hall was published in 1969 and revised version was printed in 1975. This publication remains the only document on the geography of health and disease in Uganda to this day. During this same period Langlands was the editor for the Uganda Journal and president of the Uganda Society. He also edited and published the department of geography Occasional Papers. We will discuss the publications later. Below we discuss Langlands’ performance in churning out graduate students.

SUPERVISION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS

Langlands supervised many students in his twenty three years at Makerere. He was, however, not very successful in training local geography scholars at the Ph.D. level. Many of the Ph.D. and some of the M.A. students he supervised came from other countries. The department awarded one local Ph.D. to Victoria Mwaka.

The majority of the graduates of the department did their graduate studies in British, the Commonwealth, and American universities. But the students were few in number. It is a shame that such an energetic individual like Langlands did not produce more students at M.A. and Ph. D. levels. Why was such a successful advisor unable to produce local Ph.Ds? Was this a product of internal (departmental conditions)? Were Ugandan students not interested in academia?

There are two reasons for the lack of Ph.Ds. in geography at Makerere. The first reason is that few students considered graduate school an option. The Uganda government was an attractive employer of young graduates of Makerere. A civil servant position in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s was more attractive than a teaching assistantship – an academic “houseboy” or “housegirl.” The terms academic houseboy and housegirl were used to refer to graduate assistants in the university.

The second reason was the lack of good degrees offered by the department. The department was famous for its awarding very few upper class honors degrees, and once every ten or more years, a first class honors was awarded. Those students who entered graduate studies sought out for other departments or universities. It is true that the department lacked good degrees, but the graduates of the department were well prepared for the rigors of graduate studies elsewhere.

Professor Langlands and the department of geography at Makerere remained true to the British traditional of hard grading. The department hardly gave first class honors degrees. It is on this issue that one may find cause to question this tradition. We find it difficult to accept the argument that in Langlands’ nine years as head of the department only one student of first class material came along. The academic rigidness in awarding degrees probably discouraged many possible future academics. Those who became graduate assistants or teaching assistants faced a long period of toil ahead. No wonder they were called academic houseboys or housegirls. Some graduate students left the program after several years of frustration. The highest degree completion belonged to the students who joined other universities.

A few of the students who completed their graduate degrees outside the country came back to teach in the department of geography, and then left for government or private sector jobs. During his tenure, Professor Langlands supervised four completed Ph. D. students, and two uncompleted Ph.Ds. One of the four Ph.D. degrees completed was awarded to Dr. Victoria Mwaka, the only Ugandan to earn a Ph.D. degree from the department. Dr. Mwaka has since left the department for a political
career. The other Ph.D. students were non-Ugandans.

Professor Langlands also supervised a total of nine M.A. students. Five of the M.A. students were Ugandans, and one of the five was a Ugandan-Asian. The other four were international students. One of the four international students did not complete the degree.

As an authority on Ugandan geography, and a senior professor in Uganda, and East Africa, Langlands served on several M.A. committees at the University of Nairobi, and University of Zambia. He was an external examiner for both undergraduate and graduate degrees in both universities. Although the department at Makerere had few graduate students during Professor Langlands’ tenure as head, it graduated many undergraduate students. Many of the graduates had double majors – geography and another subject. As noted earlier, many of the graduates of the department ended up in government careers, and a few others went on to graduate schools outside the country.

**PUBLICATIONS**

As pointed out earlier Langlands’ interests were diverse. He published on all topics. He admits this fact in his curriculum vitae of 1976, shortly before he left Uganda. He wrote:

“My main interests in geography lie in a wide variety of aspects of human geography, with a particular focus on political and historical geography. In the field of physical geography my interest lies primarily in biogeography and ecological problems… I have a special interest in medical geography” (Langlands, 1976).

A short list of some of his publication is indexed at the back of the paper. The discussion here examines his publications under four classifications – *Uganda in Maps, Occasional Papers, Uganda Journal, and The East African Geographical Review*. This classification is similar to Professor Langlands’ own classification of his works.

*Uganda in Maps* was the most important project that Professor Langlands worked on (Langlands, 1983). Unlike other publications and projects of this nature, his was a one man operation. It was an extensive detailed project of 1000 pages – rather too big for standard publications. It is still in a manuscript form. Langlands did not follow the simple sequence from physical to human. He wanted the book to be understood by public administrators and geographers. He therefore, chose to deal with administration and population first. The manuscript represents Professor Langlands’ concern for education, planning, and geography.

*Uganda in Maps* is made up of seven parts: Administration and Population, Physical Environment, Biological Environment, Economic Response and Land Use, Economic and Social Infrastructures, Social Heritage and Cultural Landscape, and the Maps. Altogether there are 76 major thematic maps. Some maps such as boundary evolution, district evolution, migrations, growth of Kampala are illustrated in detail – 32 such maps. It is unfortunate that this vast illustrative work was never made available to a wider readership. Although it was submitted to the publishers in 1975, it was never published. Political changes in Uganda in 1979, and a census in 1980, rendered the 1974-76 Uganda in Maps obsolete.

A few copies of *Uganda in Maps*, remain in the department of geography at Makerere. The copies are still used as text for the Systematic Geography of Uganda course. The manuscript, although outdated, remains the most detailed examination of Ugandan geography. It was and still is the Geography of Uganda – “The Gospels According to St. Langlands.”

The Makerere Department of Geography *Occasional Papers* publication was started in 1967 when Professor Langlands became acting head of the department. His objective was to “preserve in some permanent form, something of great quantity of geographical material coming out of the department” (Langlands, 1985). He edited volumes 1 to 70 in the first nine years. Most of the papers were of empirical nature based on research done in Uganda. A few of the papers were based on research done on Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania. The composition of the papers are as follows: 4 Ph.Ds., 4 M.A theses, 3 undergraduate theses, 4 teaching manuals, 2 methodological papers, 2 Atlases, 3 Gazettes, and the rest are miscellaneous papers. These occasional papers were distributed...
widely in U.K. universities and some U.S. universities with strong African studies programs.

Professor Langlands was the editor of the *Uganda Journal* between 1963 to 1975. He produced 15 issues. *The Uganda Journal* began in January 1934. It is one of the oldest journals in the region. It was a highly respected journal with a reputation as the premier journal in the country. The journal circulation peaked in 1970 during his tenure as editor. As editor, he managed to strike a balance between a wide range of subjects, regions of the country, and the contributors (civil servants, colonial civil servants, and academics).

*The East African Geographical Review* was a journal less reputable than *The Uganda Journal* (Langlands, 1985). It was started later than *The Uganda Journal* in 1963, and it had a smaller readership. The first editor was Dr. Hoyle. After his departure Professor Langlands took over as editor of the journal. Most of the articles of the journal were from Makerere geography staff. It was argued that scholars should offer their empirical works to local journals. Professor Langlands also started the National Bibliographies.

**OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Professor Langlands had interests in collecting scholarly works. He amassed an extensive personal library on Africa (Langlands, 1997; Hoyle, 1989). This is now known as the “Langlands Collections.” It is housed in the department of geography at the University of Cork, Ireland. During his tenure as editor of the *Uganda Journal* (1963 to 1975), he contributed regularly a Uganda Bibliography. His work with the Uganda Geographical Society was very commendable.

He was a member of most learned societies – the Royal Geographical Society, Royal Institute of International Affairs, the Royal Commonwealth Society, Institute of British Geographers, and many others. He also paid a lifetime membership fee for the department of geography at Makerere University to the Royal Geographical Society and the International Geographical Union. He also held consultant positions in several government and international organizations. His membership to the Town and Country Planning Board of Uganda was probably the most notable and visible civic contribution to the country.

**THE OTHER SIDE OF LANGLANDS**

Langlands the serious scholar was also very humorous (Macpherson, 1989, 1997). His work, accomplishments, and failures were often the source of his humor. He, for example, jokingly pointed out that his Ph. D. research was 300,000 words far in excess of the 70,000 words required. He was famously known to have organized annual end of examination parties for 3:1:1 students of geography (geography majors) and staff. These parties were nicknamed Paper IX – Quantitative Liquid Methods. We are certain that Langlands had a part in the selection of this name. Langlands the scholar became skilled recruiter for geography through the “Quantitative Liquid Methods.” He knew the students’ weakness and exploited it to the benefit of geography. He also was known to dance nonstop at parties. The serious scholar took his party time seriously.

Professor Langlands had enthusiasm for everything he did. For a long time he was a Patron of the Rugby Club at Makerere University, a member and later patron of the Scottish Dancing Club, and he was also a good actor. He was nicknamed Ratty for his memorable performance in *Toad of Toad Hall* (Macpherson, 1989; 1997). He was also interested in government. He sought fairness and justice. His search for fairness and justice was demonstrated in his role on the Commission of Inquiry into Makerere University Deaths (Langlands, 1975)

**LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE BRITISH COMMUNITY**

As Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Professor of Geography, Langlands was one of the highest placed British nationals in Uganda during the 1970s. He also was one of the few British nationals who had worked for the colonial government in Uganda. He was a product of the colonial rule. That made him a senior British national in Uganda. No doubt many ambassadors consulted with him.

His senior position did not go unnoticed. Even a tyrant like Amin sought Langlands’ wisdom.
Probably because of his many students, Professor Langlands’ name must have been suggested to Amin as a good candidate for the chairmanship of the above mentioned commission of inquiry. Little did Amin realize that Langlands would sink his energy and enthusiasm in the work ahead.

CONFLICTS WITH AMIN

In 1976, Professor Langlands was selected to chair the Commission of Inquiry into Makerere Deaths. Langlands whose search for fairness was well known to all who crossed his path was determined to find the truth about the killings and disappearance of Makerere students and personnel. He interviewed policemen, doctors, students and ordinary people. He was yet to interview the warden of Africa Hall (one of the halls of residence at Makerere University). The warden (Mrs. Teresa Nanziri Mukasa-Bukenya) disappeared on the eve of the day she was to appear before the commission. Her body was later found in the forest near Kampala. According to the Langlands’ unpublished report, his search for the truth could have led to his expulsion.

In 1976, Langlands was expelled from Uganda. He was given 48 hours to leave the country. He barely had time to park a few belongings and rush to the airport. The abrupt departure from Uganda in 1976 was the very opposite of his arrival in Uganda in 1953. It is a pity that the Amin regime chose to repay his years of work in such a manner. We hope that his work will be one day rewarded in an appropriate manner.

LIFE AFTER MAKERERE

After he left Uganda, Langlands spent a year as a fellow at the London School of Economics. In 1977, he was appointed Director of Studies and Head of Department, School of Environmental Sciences, Ulster Polytechnic. He was also given the title of Professor. In 1978, he was honored by the Queen of England. He was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire for services to higher education overseas. He later settled down in Northern Ireland. In 1989, while returning from the Institute of British Geographers meeting, his plane crashed while attempting to land.

CONCLUSION

Langlands probably had a greater knowledge of people, things and places in Uganda than any other geographer of his time. He had a great diversity of interests. This was reinforced by his strong drive and endurance that is very characteristic of the experts of the colonial era. In an era of specialization, Langlands was a master of all. He wrote on all aspects of topics on Uganda. He certainly made a mark on the geography of Uganda both internationally and locally. He labored to document all geographical aspects of Uganda in one of may works: *Uganda in Maps*. This work needs to be updated and published. In his own words, his major areas of interest were applied geography, ecological geography, medical geography, development geography, and historical geography (Langlands, 1985). These interests are products of his lived experiences in Uganda. His interests in ecological geography originated in his research on the distribution of tsetse flies in Uganda, 1890-1960. His interests in medical and development geography arose while working in Uganda.

The Makerere geography department trained many government administrators under the leadership of Professors Baker and Langlands (Langlands, 1985). Langlands developed and taught a course entitled Geography of Administration. This was one of his major contributions to the applied geography of Uganda. His association with the Town and Regional Planning Department made him aware of the practical value of geography to social needs of the country (Langlands, 1985). Professor Langlands believed that geography is an environmental science. To him the environment was at the core of geography.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Mr. Ian Langlands, for allowing us access to several important documents and for sharing his family history. We also thank Dr. Brian Hoyle and Professor Margaret Macpherson for encouragement and valuable information contained in their letters. We would like to thank the reviewers for their comments and suggestions.
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A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF LANGLANDS’ WORKS

This is not a complete record of everything Professor Langlands wrote. The purpose here is to identify the principal publications. Mr. lan Langlands, the brother, has made available to the authors a complete list of all writings and citations. A selected list has been included here.

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